

Prairie Bird Species of Concern - Ecology and Management Summary

Each grassland bird species requires unique prairie conditions. Subtle differences across the landscape determine the suitability of local habitat for different species for different reasons.

Species Name Species Status	General Habitat Characteristics	Nest Site Characteristics	Management Recommendations to Promote Species	Notes	Arrival Date	Nesting Dates	Incubation Period	Number of Broods	Primary Summer Diet	Secondary Summer Diet
					Departure Date		Days to Fledging			
Low to Intermediate Grassland Cover Associated Species										
McCown's Longspur ¹ prairie endemic G5/S2B	Open sparse grassland; areas structurally similar to heavily grazed pastures.	Ground nester. Shallow depression in the ground: either in the open or beside vegetation.	Maintain short, sparsely vegetated native prairie. Moderate to heavy, or season long grazing can make mixed-grass prairie suitable.	Limited shrubs in area are suitable; Nestlings suffer high rates of (mammalian) predation.	Late April	Early May to Late July	12 days	2	seeds/plant material	insects
					Mid-August		10-12 days			
Chestnut-collared Longspur ² prairie endemic G5/S3B	Sparse; recently grazed, mowed, or burned; minimal litter.	Ground nester: often protected on south and east sides	Keep native pastures intact. Manage for fairly short vegetation with sparse litter accumulation.	Native prairie specialist. Areas with occasional shrubs suitable.	Mid-April	Early May to Late July	10-13 days	2	insects	seeds
					Late September		9-14 days			
Lark Bunting ³ prairie endemic G5/S3B	Primarily short-to-mid grass prairie. Prefers areas with some shrubs. Generally prefers areas $\geq 10 \text{ km}^2$.	Ground nester. Nest placed next to/under various plant species	Provide areas of short vegetation with protective cover for nesting.	May be present in agricultural fields, but use is limited. Highest densities in native prairie, though will nest in CRP lands.	Early May	Mid-May to Mid-August	12 days	1 to 2	insects	secondary seeds/plant material
					Late August		8-9 days			
Long-billed Curlew ⁴ prairie endemic G5/S2B	Open sparse grassland preferred; taller, denser grass during brood rearing.	Ground nester. Nest is a scrape in the ground lined with various bits of vegetation, pebbles, and other organic matter.	Provide large, open level to gently rolling grasslands with short vegetation.	Generally avoids areas with high density of shrubs.	Early April	Mid-to Late April	28-31 days (able to leave nest within hours of hatching)	1	carnivorous (terrestrial invertebrates, vertebrates, eggs, etc.)	-
					Mid-September		32-45 days			
Sprague's Pipit ⁵ prairie endemic 4/S2B	Intermediate height with moderate litter.	Ground nester; dense, grassy, relatively tall vegetation, minimal forbs present, little bare ground	Provide native prairie with intermediate vegetation height and low visual obstruction.	Avoids areas with shrubs.	Early May	Late May to Mid-July	13-14 days	1, poss. 2	almost entirely insects	very minimal seeds/plant material
					Mid-September		9-12 days			

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Ferruginous Hawk ⁶ prairie endemic G4/S2B	Prefer open prairie and shrubsteppe habitat.	Exposed: on cliffs, trees, ground, or manmade structures.	Provide/protect suitable nest sites, protect active nest areas from disturbance, and improve habitat for prey.	Prefers flat, rolling terrain. Avoids high elevation, forested areas and narrow canyons. Avoids areas recently altered for cultivation	March	Late April to Mid-July	28-33 days	1	small mammals (inc. jackrabbits, cottontail rabbits, ground squirrels, and prairie dogs)	birds, reptiles, insects
					Late September		44-48 days			
Swainson's Hawk ⁷ G5/S3B	Grasslands, sparse shrublands, and small open woodlands,	Nest in deciduous trees (about 50% of nests reused).	Provide open grasslands with occasional trees for nesting and perching.	Species unique in switching from primarily small mammal diet to insects after young birds fledge.	Mid-March	Early May to Mid-July	28-35 days	1	mainly vertebrates during breeding season (mammals, birds, & reptiles)	invertebrates at other times
					Early November		30 days			
Intermediate to Tall Grassland Cover Associated Species										
Grasshopper Sparrow ⁸ G5/S3B	Prefers moderately open grasslands with patchy bare ground. Generally avoids areas with extensive shrub cover, although some shrub cover is desirable.	Ground nester: nest often domed with grasses and side entrance.	Provide/protect large areas of contiguous grassland of intermediate height with moderately deep litter cover and low shrub density.	May be locally abundant, generally rare throughout range. Somewhat area sensitive. Moderate-to-high nest predation.	Early May	Mid-June to Late July	11-12 days	2 (poss. 3)	insects	rarely seeds/plant material in summer
					Early September		8-9 days			
Baird's Sparrow ⁹ prairie endemic G4/S2B	Ungrazed to moderately grazed, generally with litter depth of ~2 cm.	Ground nester; shallow scrape at base of grass clump.	Provide areas of native grassland (or idle tame pastures) with moderately deep litter. Avoid excessive grazing and limit shrub encroachment.	Scattered low shrubs and residual vegetation from last year are preferred habitat; area sensitive (favors large parcels). Nesting densities change according to local habitat conditions.	Mid-May	Late May to Late July	11-12 days	1	insects	seeds/plant material
					Early September		8-10 days			

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Bobolink ¹⁰ G5/S2B	Tall grass, flooded meadows, prairie. Most suitable habitat is moderate-to-tall vegetation, moderate-to-dense vegetation and moderately deep litter.	Ground nester: often located in wet habitats, often at the base of large forbs.	Provide large areas of native and tame grasslands of moderate height and density with adequate litter.	Somewhat area sensitive. Highly susceptible to nest abandonment if disturbed during breeding season.	Mid-May	Mid-June to Late July	11-13 days	1	insects	seeds/plant material
					Early September		10-11 days			
Brewer's Sparrow ¹¹ G5/S2B	Suitable breeding habitat contains dense shrubs, generally sagebrush. Average height generally <1.5 meters.	Nests built in taller, dense sagebrush, with limited bare ground and herbaceous cover.	Maintain extensive areas of sagebrush-dominated shrublands with average shrub cover of 10-30%, average shrub height of 0.4-1.5 m, and an understory of native grasses and forbs.	Can tolerate up to 3 weeks without water while on seed diet.	Early May	Late May to Mid-July	10-12 days	2	insects	secondary seeds/plant material
					Late September		8-9 days			
Loggerhead Shrike ¹² G4/S3B	Open prairie, pastures with fencerows, agricultural fields, riparian areas.	Usually well-hidden in crook of deciduous tree or robust shrub.	Provide grassland habitat with scattered trees and shrubs for foraging, nesting, and perching.	Lacking talons, may impale dead prey on barbed wire, branch, or thorn for easier consumption.	Late April	mid-June to Late July	16-17 days	2 broods possible	insects	small vertebrates, carrion
					Early September		17-21 days			
Greater Sage-Grouse ¹³ G4/S3	Sagebrush communities; generally prefers larger-stature sagebrush, but will use other habitats during the non-breeding season including meadows and grasslands.	Ground nester: nest generally placed under sagebrush. Depression lined with grass and sagebrush leaves.	Maintain expansive stands of sagebrush (<i>Artemisia</i> spp.), with forb understory; open sites for leks; and perennial grass and forb stands intermixed with sagebrush for brood rearing.		Permanent Resident	Mid-April to Late July	25-27 days	1	forb buds and flowers	-
							7-10 days			
Wetland Associated Species										
Franklin's Gull ¹⁴ G4G5/S3B	Extensive prairie marshes with emergent vegetation.	Nest is a floating mat of reeds anchored to suitable emergent vegetation (bulrush important). Colonial nester.	Maintain water levels at nesting sites. Protect nesting sites from human disturbance.	Highly susceptible to human disturbance while nesting. Water must be present at wetland at time young fledge.	Late April	Early June to Early July	24-25 day	1	Insects, worms	small vertebrates, other invertebrates, grains/seeds
					Late September		32 days			

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Common Tern ¹⁵ G3S3B	Open water bodies with islands for nesting.	Nests colonially; ground nester. Nest is a scrape in the ground generally lined with organic material.	Maintain water levels at nesting sites. Protect nesting colonies from human recreation or disturbance.	Generally, nesting sites are sparsely vegetated.	Mid-May Late September	Early June to Late July	21-27 days 26-27 days	1, rarely 2	Fish	Aquatic invertebrates/ insects
Marbled Godwit ¹⁶ BLM Sensitive species	Short, sparse to moderately vegetated uplands for nesting and foraging. Wetland complexes for foraging.	Ground nester. Nests in wet and dry areas of wet meadow, upland areas of short (<30 cm) grass.	Provide large expanses of short, sparse to moderately vegetated native grasslands with wetland complexes.	This species may be area sensitive, rarely occurring on blocks of contiguous grassland <100 ha. Territories are large and include both feeding and nesting areas	Early May Early September	Mid-May to Early July	21-23 days 21 days	1	Aquatic invertebrates	Insects
Willet ¹⁷ BLM Sensitive species	Short native grasslands idle during the nesting season. Prefer shallow-water wetlands with sparse vegetation.	Ground nester: often nest near a conspicuous object such as a piece of wood, a rock, or dried cattle dung.	Provide large expanses of native grasslands and wetland complexes		Late April Early October	Mid-May to Mid-June	22-29 days 27-31 days	1	Aquatic invertebrates	-
Wilson's Phalarope ¹⁸ BLM Sensitive species	Both fresh and alkali wetlands with open water, emergent vegetation, and open shoreline.	Ground nester: nests are placed on the ground in wetlands, wet meadows and in grasslands adjacent to wetlands.	Provide suitable wetland with open water, emergent vegetation, and open shoreline in addition to upland habitat throughout the breeding season.	Males, the less colorful of the sexes, incubate the eggs and tend the young.	Mid-April Early September	Early May to Late July	18-27 days Young leave nest within 24 hrs of hatching. Actual days to fledging unknown	1, occ. 2	Aquatic invertebrates	seeds

1 - With 1994, Dechant et al. 2003j
2 - Hill and Gould 1997, Dechant et al. 2003c
3 - Shane 2000, Dechant et al. 2003m
4 - Dugger and Dugger 2002, Dechant et al. 2003i
5 - Robbins and Dale 1999, Dechant et al. 2003g
6 - Bechard and Schmutz 1995, Dechant et al. 2003l

7 - England et al. 1997, Dechant et al. 2003a
8 - Vickery 1996, Dechant et al. 2003d
9 - Johnson & Igl 2001, Green et al. 2002, Dechant et al. 2003b
10 - Martin and Gavin 1995, Dechant et al. 2003k
11 - Rotenberry et al. 1999, Ehrlich et al. 1988
12 - Yosef 1996, Dechant et al. 2003e

13 - Rowland 2004, Ehrlich et al. 1988
14 - Burger and Gochfeld 1994, Ehrlich et al. 1988
15 - Nisbet 2002, Ehrlich et al. 1988
16 - Dechant et al. 2003f, Ehrlich et al. 1988
17 - Lowther et al. 2001, Dechant et al. 2003h
18 - Colwell and Jehl 1994, Ehrlich et al. 1988